

allowing all elements of the CALFED Program, including the ERP, to progress, by ensuring the recovery and conservation of species and habitats. The ERP will be the primary mechanism to accomplish recovery and conservation of the covered species of the MSCS. In the event that other program actions have negative effects on the ecosystem baseline, the MSCS will require mitigation measures to maintain the ecosystem at the baseline level of health.

## Implementation Concerns

**Agricultural Resources** Many entities have expressed concerns about the effects of the CALFED Program (especially the ERP and Levee Program) on agricultural land. Agricultural resources are an important feature of the existing environment of the state and are recognized and protected under CEQA and State and federal policy. One of the major principles of the State's agricultural policy is to sustain the long-term productivity of the State's agriculture by conserving and protecting the soil, water, and air which are agriculture's basic resources. It is CALFED policy that adverse environmental effects to agricultural resources resulting from CALFED program elements, projects, and actions will be fully assessed and disclosed under CEQA and NEPA, and avoided or mitigated to the extent required by law. Assessment, disclosure, and avoidance, and other mitigation strategies will be developed at the programmatic and project-specific levels in consultation with other State, federal, and local agencies with special expertise or authority over agricultural resources which may be affected by the Program, such as the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

CALFED seeks to preserve as much agricultural land as possible during implementation in Phase III consistent with meeting all program goals. Some of the land needed for program implementation is already owned by the government and that land will be used when appropriate. Partnerships with landowners, including easements with willing land owners, will be pursued when appropriate to obtain mutual benefit if the appropriate government land is not available. Acquisition of fee title to land will be from willing sellers only, and will be used when neither available government land nor partnerships are appropriate or cost effective for the specific need.

Numerous activities and programs are ongoing or proposed that would generate a negative impact to agriculture by expanding habitat for fish and wildlife. Examples are actions being taken through the Central Valley Project Improvement Act and the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture to protect and restore significant areas of land in the Central Valley. To the extent that these activities and programs establish habitat that helps to meet CALFED objectives, that habitat reduces the amount of habitat restoration that CALFED must carry out. Coordination of actions will help minimize impacts. Also, to the extent that these activities and programs propose water acquisition for specific watersheds that is also proposed by CALFED, that water reduces the amount of water that CALFED must acquire. Careful coordination will help ensure that all agencies' restoration programs are carried out in the most efficient way.